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# Russ Party Shakeup Reportedly Ousts 4

## Ideological, Information Chiefs Believed Fired

Exclusive to The Times from Reuters

MOSCOW — Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid T. Brezhnev was returning to Moscow by train Sunday amid unconfirmed reports of a shakeup in the party's ideological and information departments.

Brezhnev left Budapest early Sunday after attending ceremonies on the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Hungary during World War II and was scheduled to arrive in Moscow early today.

Brezhnev's return coincided with reports that four key officials controlling major ideological areas had been ordered out of their posts and that he has survived a challenge to his leadership. The four officials reported ousted are:

—Vladimir Stepanov, head of the Central Committee's Department of Agitation and Propaganda, who is said to have been nominated to fill the long-vacant post of Soviet ambassador to Peking.

—Nikolai Mikhailov, chairman of the watchdog state committee on the press, who is said to have been pensioned off.

—Alexei Romanov, chief of the state committee for cinematography, who is said by some sources to

have been offered an ambassadorial post and to have been retired by others.

—Nikolai Mesyatsev, chairman of the state committee for radio and television, also said to have been offered an ambassadorship.

Official Soviet sources have declined all comment on the reported changes, and there was no indication of whether they portend a hardening or a softening of the party's already tough control over all aspects of the arts and the press.

Meanwhile, in Vienna, East European Communist sources said Brezhnev has survived a challenge to his leadership.

But they claim that Premier Alexei N. Kosygin, at 66 tired and ill, is prepared to step down in favor of Dep. Premier Dmitry S. Polyansky.

And they named Andrei P. Kirilenko, a member of the Soviet Politburo, as the man most likely to succeed Mikhail A. Suslov, 67, as the party's top ideologist.

Suslov again has been reported as suffering from an attack of tuberculosis, a disease that has interrupted his official life at intervals since the mid-1950s.

The challenge to Brezhnev is thought to have reached its climax in late January or early February.

### Economic Failures

Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, East German and Hungarian Communists named Alexander N. Shelepin, at 51 the youngest member of the Politburo, as leading a bid to oust Brezhnev because of failings in the Soviet economy.

Aligned with Shelepin, the sources said, were Suslov and Politburo member Kirill Mazurov.

But like Suslov, Shelepin too has been reported ill, and now is said to be recovering from a gall-bladder operation, an illness which would keep him away from active work for two or three months.

Either because of the illnesses, or because the challengers could find no support in the 11-man Politburo, the bid to remove Brezhnev failed.

According to Soviet sources, Brezhnev will find at least two more of his fellow presidium members ailing.

Kosygin, 66, has been hospitalized with a cold, according to Japanese diplomats who say the Russians gave this reason for the cancellation of a scheduled appointment today with Shojiro Kawashima, visiting vice president of the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party.

### Visit Canceled

President Nikolai V. Podgorny, 67, the third member of the ruling triumvirate, canceled an official visit to Japan, scheduled to begin Tuesday, because he too had a feverish cold, Japanese sources said, again quoting Soviet officials.

There was no news on the whereabouts of Polyansky, 1st Dep. Premier who specializes in agriculture and who has not been reported present at public functions for more than a week.

The removal of the four ideology officials was reported to have been ordered last weekend at a Central Committee meeting addressed by Politburo member Mazurov.

Some reports said that the four had been removed after Mazurov criticized their handling of preparations for the centennial of V. I. Lenin's birth, which is to be celebrated on April 22.

### Speculation Rife

The events of the past week have added to the speculation that all is not normal at the top.

Against the rumors of crisis was the fact that Brezhnev was traveling back to Moscow the slow way by train and the fact that the long-prepared Lenin celebrations, which have dominated Soviet life for the last year, are less than three weeks away.

A clear picture of what is going on, if indeed anything is, may only become apparent when the 24th Congress of the Communist Party, which by strict party statutes should have been held this spring, is held late in the year, observers said.